REMARKS:

In the outstanding Office Action August 23, 2005, the Examiner rejected claims 1-16. In response to the Amendment filed on December 23, 2005, the Examiner issued an Advisory Action (mailed January 20, 2006).

For convenience of the Examiner, the amendments and arguments presented in the December 23, 2005 Amendment are repeated herein.

Further, new claim 17 is added herein. Thus, claims 1-17 are pending and under consideration. The rejections are traversed below.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(b):

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Pat. App. No. H03-131981 (Kazuo).

Kazuo is directed to selecting an image having a predetermined connection relation with a currently selected image so that the selected image is processed after the currently selected image. For example, when a user selects a circle shaped image, triangle shaped images that are connected to the circle shaped image are sequentially selected (see, FIG. 2 and corresponding text). That is, Kazuo is directed to sequentially selecting image(s) based on a predefined connection relation of the image(s) with a user selected image (i.e., selection is restricted to connected images).

In contrast to Kazuo, the present invention eliminates the need for individually selecting elements of figures without restricting the selection to figures having connected, sequential or uniform elements. For example, as illustrated in FIGS. 10 and 11 of the application, non-connected figure elements on a particular straight line can be selected based on the figure elements' relationship to each other, and figure elements that are regarded as connected after execution of a subsequent process, such as error correction, are selected.

Independent claim 1 recites, "designating one of the figure elements" and "retrieving another figure element which is related to the designated figure element without requiring that the other figure element be connected with the designated figure element." Similarly, claims 6 and 11 recite that the present invention retrieves figure element(s) "related to the designated figure element without requiring that the other figure element be connected with the designated figure element."

Independent claim 16 recites, "automatically retrieving elements of the figure in accordance with said defined relationship of the elements upon selection of one of the elements in the relationship without requiring that said one of the elements be connected with the retrieved elements."

Kazuo that sequentially selects images having a predefined connection relationship does not teach or suggest the above-discussed features of independent claims 1, 6, 11 and 16.

For at least the above-mentioned reasons, claims depending from the independent claims are patentably distinguishable over Kazuo. For example, claims 2, 7 and 12 recite that the present invention includes retrieving a figure element(s) "in a neighborhood of the designated figure element." Kazuo does not teach or suggest these features of claims 2, 7 and 12.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

NEW CLAIM:

New claim 17 is added herein to recite, "defining arrangement data indicative of an arrangement of elements that form a corresponding figure based on a relationship of the elements including unconnected elements of a first figure and a second figure." Claim 17 also recites that the present invention includes, "selecting an element of the first figure in response to a selection of at least one element of the second figure based on the arrangement data."

Kazuo does not teach or suggest, "defining arrangement data indicative of an arrangement of elements based on a relationship of the elements including unconnected elements of a first figure and a second figure" and "selecting an element of the first figure in response to a selection of at least one element of the second figure based on the arrangement data", as recited in claim 17. Instead, Kazuo is limited to sequentially selecting images based on a predefined connection relation of the images.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that new claim 17 is patentably distinguishable over Kazuo.

CONCLUSION:

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

If there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested

to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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